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The Effects of New Public Management on Public Servant Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

The public sector is often lauded for its egalitarian principles and penchant for mutual cooperation, but competition is increasingly becoming the norm which may affect communication, efficiency, goals, and objectives. The purpose of this study is to explore the effects that competition and private sector practices have on public servants. A survey was sent to 700 employees of municipal governments in Massachusetts; 45 respondents completed the survey over the course of two weeks. The principle lesson learned from this research was that while public servants view competitive practices negatively, and nearly half of respondents viewed their performance evaluations negatively, neither competitive practices nor irrelevant performance evaluations seem to have any impact on perceived job satisfaction. The implications of this are that in spite of all the criticisms of new public management, it is unlikely to have an impact on job satisfaction. Limitations such as a small, restricted survey demonstrates the need for a larger, more representative survey investigating the effects of competition on public servants.

Keywords: new public management, job satisfaction, competition

Introduction

Competition is one of the primary forces that drives a market economy and the private sector. In a mixed marked economy, which much of the developed world has adopted, the public sector is also subjected to competition. Public sector organizations not only compete economically with one another, but compete in ways that affect communication, efficiency, goals, and objectives. Competition is not only affected by the market that an organization occupies, but the organizational structure and hierarchy, as well as human behavior and psychology. Social structure within government and how it is managed greatly impacts how policy is carried out. Interactions

that public servants have with their management, job duties, and performance evaluations are not only measured of quality of life, but policy implementation.

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects that competition and private sector practices have on public servants. Are the effects positive or negative? Are there any effects at all? These are some of the questions that this study serves to answer. The broader implications of introducing competitive private sector practices into the public sector will be discussed. Two concepts will be analyzed that affect how public servants perceive their job satisfaction: new public management and public service motivation. How new public management interacts with and affects public service motivation and long term efficacy is one of the primary goals of this study, which will be of use to both practitioners of public administration and academics alike.

Like anything else, the application of private sector practices in public sector organizations has its benefits, but it may have other effects as well. The effects of competitive practices on public servants and the work they aim to achieve must be examined further, and only then may we begin to discuss broader normative implications. If the job satisfaction of public servants is to be understood as an indicator of effectiveness, then any management practices that negatively influence job satisfaction should be thoroughly examined. It is the goal of the public sector to serve the public, and thus new public management must be a means to that end, or else it may need to be reconsidered.

Literature Review

While conducting a review of the existing literature, several topics continued to be mentioned throughout: internal competition, public service motivation, mission valence, goal theory, extrinsic motivation, organizational commitment, and perverse incentives. While in principal this research is about the effects of new public management on public servant job

satisfaction, each of these concepts is deeply woven into how the two relate to one another. Internal competition is one of the possibly adverse effects of new public management and new public management promotes it. Public service motivation is a major factor of public servant job satisfaction, but if conditions resulting from new public management practices prove to be too negative, then public service motivation may not be enough to recruit and retain new, qualified public sector employees. Mission valence and goal theory come into play when competitive practices and certain methods of performance evaluation distort the initially perceived goals and overall mission of the organization. If goals and mission change due to increased focus on competitive practices, then organizational commitment and consequently job satisfaction may be at risk. Finally, competitive practices instilled through new public management, such as quantitative performance metrics, may create perverse incentives for public servants which may call into question the normative implications of such practices.

Internal Competition

One philosophy associated with new public management is to run government like a business. New public management views public service as a product to be sold on a market and, like any other service on the market, is subjected to competition. This philosophy is not confined only to competition with other producers of a service, but internal competition within the organization as well. Internal competition is promoted, often times with extrinsic rewards, in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness. One of perhaps the most significant resources public organizations have that allow them to produce their products is knowledge, fostered by continued organizational learning (Siliciano, 2015). To continue to provide a high-quality product, sharing knowledge among employees is vital (Kim & Lee, 2006). Promotion of internal competition, however, can threaten knowledge-sharing within an organization and disincentivize collaborative

behavior (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). As internal competition grows within the organization, informal networks that once promoted knowledge-sharing fall by the wayside. As a part of these informal networks, employees are more likely to seek advice and share knowledge with their peers who have a similar status or job duties within the organization (Siliciano, 2015).

Right away internal competition can begin to deteriorate these links, for peers who are most similar to one another within the organization are likely to be competing with one another the most. Promotion of internal competition is not used arbitrarily however; it is a widely-adopted practice meant to improve results. However, it not only erodes knowledge-sharing, but also produces perverse incentives. Once introduced to extrinsic rewards, the perception of a public servant's purpose shifts from generating outcomes to achieving goals that result in said extrinsic rewards, regardless of outcome (Heyman & Ariely, 2004). As previously mentioned, collaboration is key in a complex governmental organization. When practices that promote internal competition are introduced to an organization, collaboration and interdependent relationships begin to deteriorate, which means that social interaction, morale, and advice-seeking behavior begin to deteriorate as well. Subsequently, when greater levels of competition are perceived, employees are less likely to not only seek advice, but also to be sought out for advice (Siliciano, 2015). A decrease in advice-seeking behavior may lead not only to negative consequences affecting social aspects of an organization, but may also lead to unnecessary mistakes happening, thus negatively affecting efficiency as well.

A key aspect of internal competition and organizational behavior is competition over scarce resources. When resources are scarce, and they virtually always are, individuals are relegated to compete with others so that they manipulate them to their own ends (White, 1974). While we would like to believe that public servants act only in the interest of the public, the government, and

their respective organization, it is a reality that individuals are morally relegated to pursue their own self-interest as rational actors (Coleman, 1964; Coleman, 1966). Public organizations are particularly vulnerable to this reality, considering that they are distanced from the free market where the extrinsic motives of a for-profit corporation may be more conspicuously tied to their employees own extrinsic motives. Instead, public organizations rely on the interest of their employees falling in line with their direction, goals, and purpose (White, 1974). Individuals join and participate in organizations because they believe they can achieve their goals through the organization, or that the organization shares the individuals' goals. However, when a high degree of internal competition is present, the goal of the individual may shift from the perceived goal of the organization (which the individual and the organization may share), to whichever goal the individual is being extrinsically rewarded to accomplish. Internal competition over scarce resources may have effects on group cohesion as well. The degree to which scarce resources that are necessary for individuals to attain their goals are nondivisible is the basis of group cohesion (White, 1974). Unfortunately for public organizations, as previously mentioned, knowledge is one of the key resources necessary to produce high quality products, and provide a high quality of service. Knowledge, however, is divisible, especially after advice-sharing networks are deteriorated and relationships shift from interdependent to independent. Group cohesion in a knowledge-driven work environment is dependent upon knowledge-sharing and collaboration, the two of which are vulnerable to being negatively affected by internal competition.

New Public Management

Competition is not the only principle that new public management espouses. Two other principles are managerialism and market orientation (Kolthoff, 2007). Managerialism, as characterized by Pollitt (1993), involves continuous increases in efficiency, a labor force

disciplined to productivity, and managers being given the right to manage. This principle is adopted from industrial production management practices where efficiency and productivity are valued most. Market orientation, as characterized by Walsh (1995), involves continual improvements in quality, emphasis on contract and markets, and measurement of performance. This principle stems from the desire of market-based coordination over the traditional hierarchical structure of bureaucratic organizations. The assertion that if government were run more like a business, then there would be greater efficiency is debatable, however. It is important to distinguish bureaucracy as an organizational framework that emphasizes formalization, centralization, and structuralizing (Kolthoff, 2007). These concepts are not mutually exclusive to efficiency. In fact, large businesses rely on bureaucracy of their own to manage efficiency over large scale operations. New public management can show us that the focus of public administration should not be bureaucracy, and that it should be relegated to the scaffolding on which productivity, efficiency, and goals may be achieved.

Public Service Motivation, Mission Valence, and Goal Theory

There are a few concepts that are relevant to any analysis of job satisfaction in public organizations: public service motivation, mission valence, and goal theory. Public service motivation has been defined as “an individual’s orientation to delivering services to people with a purpose to do good for others and society” (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). An individual’s service to society is based on social norms whereas the drive to maximize individual utility is based on rational motives. Practitioners of public administration pay attention to public service motivation because it has been associated with retention (Naff & Crum, 1999) and performance (Camilleri &

Van Der Heijden, 2007). Mission valence is a concept developed by Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) that refers to the level of importance members of public organizations attribute to the organization's mission. Simply put, the more important a member of a public organization believes the organization's mission to be, the greater their motivation to work and be a part of that mission (Caillier, 2014). Similar to an organization's mission are the goals that are assigned to an employee to accomplish, which play an important role in motivation as well. The type of goals that are most effective at increasing performance are both specific and challenging (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). Accomplishing challenging goals increases an individual's sense of self-respect, pride, and achievement (Mento, Locke, & Klein, 1992). Assigning specific goals to employees is important because it reduces the dissonance that may result from an employee not being completely sure of their role in the organization. When goals are specific, employees know exactly what to work towards and know exactly what it will take to attain accomplishment. The result of both challenging and specific goals being assigned to employees is a high level of work motivation, which may subsequently lead to improved job satisfaction (Wright, 2007). In a study done by Caillier (2014), it was concluded that there is a strong positive relationship between job satisfaction and performance evaluations. Public service motivation was also found to positively correlate to performance evaluations, although the relationship was not as strong as job satisfaction and other authors have had mixed results.

Perverse Incentives

One of the concepts that is stressed in new public management under the principle of market orientation is measurement of performance. One reliable method of measuring and tracking changes in performance is the collection of quantitative data. While quantitative data is easier to interpret, it is more vulnerable to manipulation. Once the data has become manipulated, it ceases

to be an accurate measure and is thus counterproductive (Edwards & Roy, 2016). Goodhart's Law states that "when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure." A problem arises when employees who manipulate data are rewarded. While the manipulation of data is inherently a difficult behavior to research, according to a 2010 survey, 71% of respondents believed that colleagues can "game" or "cheat" performance evaluations at their organization (Abbot, 2010). Another problem with relying on quantitative data to measure performance is that because it can be manipulated, the focus of employees can shift from producing outcomes, to certain types of outputs that may be considered quantitatively significant but result in fewer significant practical outcomes (Edwards and Roy, 2016). When unethical actions are systematically promoted at the structural level, perverse incentives begin to develop. The goals of the individual become detracted from the mission of the organization, and employees begin to lose faith in their organization and their purpose within it. Consequently, public service motivation becomes deflated and performance suffers.

Organizational Commitment

Related to public service motivation is organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is a social contract between employee and employer where it is believed that a promise has been made establishing a set of reciprocal obligations to both parties (Rousseau, 1989). When this social contract is broken, it has negative effects on employees, which may include higher employee turnover, decreased job performance, and decreased organizational commitment (Robinson, 1996; Turnley, Bloodgood & Bolino, 2002). High turnover in an organization can lead to instability and increase costs associated with recruitment, selection, and training (Camilleri &

Van Der Heijden, 2007). Additionally, it is likely that employees will only do the bare minimum of work and will resign themselves from any additional duties they have taken on (Grimshaw, Earnshaw & Hebson, 2003). Deterioration of organizational commitment may also result in employees disregarding their professional development in context of their current organization and how it can benefit their organization, and instead, they begin to judge their skills and experience in the context of how it may translate to gaining employment in outside organizations. Organizational commitment is often a factor of performance evaluations, whether it is explicit or implicit. Formal performance measurement is often used as a tool for compliance and less a measure of meaningful outcomes. Informal performance measurement, rather, is often subjective and reflects levels of prosocial activity and loyalty rather than skill and ability (Camilleri & Van der Heijden, 2007).

Extrinsic Motivation

The argument that public servants are unique in that they have stronger public service motivation than those in the private sector was made prominent by Perry and Wise (1990) and is a concept that public organizations have grown to rely on. One of the results of this argument has been the notion that merit pay is not an appropriate motivator of public servants and that intrinsic motivation should be valued over extrinsic reward systems. This argument was challenged by Alonso and Lewis (2001), however. Two large sample surveys were analyzed, the MPS96 and SOFE91, surveys of federal government employees. The MPS96 survey showed a positive correlation between public service motivation and performance ratings, but this relationship was not evident in the SOFE91 survey. Furthermore, in the MPS96 survey, public service motivation had no effect on grade level, and in the SOFE91 survey, the higher public service motivation was, the lower the grade level. In addition, the belief that their organization rewarded its employees

based on merit affected performance equally, whether the respondent was motivated more by public service or extrinsic rewards. Furthermore, the belief that their organization based promotions and pay raises on performance was positively related to performance, however, only a minority of respondents held that belief. In sum, performance of employees would increase if organizations did a better job of expressing that promotions and pay raises are dependent on performance, because performance would increase for both those motivated by public service and those motivated by extrinsic rewards (Alonso & Lewis, 2001).

Hypothesis 1

From this body of literature, three hypotheses can be formulated that shed light on what can be expected from the results of the survey. The first hypothesis is that public servants who have higher levels of exposure to competitive practices will perceive them more negatively. One reason in support of this hypothesis is that if competitive practices cloud the organization's mission, then public servants are less motivated to work and be a part of that mission (Caillier, 2014). If an employee feels that his or her focus needs the fulfillment of competitive practices, for instance, meeting arbitrary performance metrics or competing over scarce resources, then the employee may feel that their social contract has been broken with their employer. After all, public servants are motivated to serve the public, and considering the shared values of public service employees, a greater level of cooperation is expected in comparison to the private sector. Turnley, Bloodgood & Bolino (2002) state that higher employee turnover, decreased job performance, and decreased organizational commitment are all symptoms of a broken social contract. Thus, it follows that these symptoms may be associated with a general decrease in how public servants perceive their job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis is that public servants who perceive their performance evaluations to be less correlated to their job duties will perceive their job satisfaction to be lower. This hypothesis can be supported by the fact that, according to a 2010 survey, 71% of respondents believed that colleagues can “game” or “cheat” performance evaluations at their organization (Abbot, 2010). When performance evaluations are perceived to be illegitimate, and not an accurate measure of how well public servants serve the public, then they may perceive that their time and effort is not being put into something that they originally signed up for. To reiterate, if an employee’s job duties are in line with serving the public, and performance evaluations are not a measure of that, and they are rewarded for effort put into tasks that do not relate to public service, then perverse incentives develop. If an employee’s public service motivation stays intact, then they may begin to lose faith in their organization and their purpose within it. When this occurs, the result may be a lower perception of job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis is that public servants who perceive competitive practices to be unfavorable will perceive their job satisfaction to be lower. Due to recent proliferation of new public management in the public sector, it can be deduced that negative perception of the practices it promotes will lower job satisfaction. This hypothesis can be supported further by White’s (1974) observation that resources are scarce which breeds an environment of natural competitiveness. When competitive management practices are compounded onto this, there may be negative consequences for those who perceive competition, to include competitive management practices, negatively. Internal competition, after all, can threaten social behavior such as knowledge-sharing, and collaborative behavior (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). Taking into consideration how social people

naturally are, it is not unreasonable to think that the promotion asocial behavior encouraged by competitive management practices would lead to decreased perception of job satisfaction.

Methods

Participants

To gauge how public servants perceived their job satisfaction, the decision was made to conduct a survey. A survey is the best method of measuring public opinion, or perception, because it collects responses, and ideally the thoughts and feelings, directly from a sample of the population one is researching. The target population in this study is public servants working in an administrative capacity. The sample that was chosen was municipal government employees within the state of Massachusetts. There are 351 towns and cities in Massachusetts. Due to participants' contact information being collected manually from each municipality's respective website, it was not realistic to survey participants from all 351 municipalities. Instead, public sector employees from the 40 municipalities with the highest populations in the state that publicly listed their employees' contact information were chosen as the final sample. The goal was to limit participants to those who had roles in administration, i.e. those who may be working at their respective town or city hall. This decision was made because employees in these roles are likely to share similar experiences and challenges. The theory was that the perception of job satisfaction among public servants in administration may be more vulnerable to competition and management styles than teachers, blue collar workers, technicians, and seasonal employees. In total, 700 participants were contacted to respond to the survey; of those 700, there were 45 respondents, making the response rate 6.4%.

Materials

The survey instrument consists of a combination of single-answer multiple choice questions, multiple-selection questions, and fill in the blank questions. There is a total of 19 questions in the survey. The first six questions pertain to job-related demographics, followed by eight questions that relate to competition and performance evaluations, and the final five questions pertain to personal demographics (Appendix A). The survey was disseminated via email and its initial release occurred on a Friday morning at the start of typical business hours. It ran for two weeks (14 days) until it was finally concluded.

Procedure

While each question asked in the survey is important to illustrating the demographics as well as the thoughts and feelings of respondents, there are some questions that are of particular import. Three relationships will be analyzed using cross tabulation, where the correlation or p-value can be calculated. One of the relationships to be evaluated will be the extent to which respondents observe competitive practices in their organization and how they perceive the effects of competitive practices in their organization. This relationship is significant because it would certainly be notable if greater exposure to competitive practices employees decreased their perception of such practices. Another relationship to be evaluated will be how strongly respondents' performance evaluations correlate to their job duties with their perception of job satisfaction. This relationship could be significant if it can be inferred that poor perception of performance evaluations leads to poor job satisfaction, or vice versa. A third relationship to be evaluated will be how respondents' perceive the effects of competitive practices in their organization with their perception of job satisfaction. If there was a correlation between the perception of competitive practices and job satisfaction, then it could be inferred that the existence of competitive practices

may affect job satisfaction, but how whether the effect is positive or negative depends on the individual.

Results

Demographics

One section of the survey was designed with the purpose of gathering demographic data on the respondents. Of the 45 respondents, 26 were male (58%), 13 were female (29%), and 6 did not respond to the question (13%). The mean age of respondents was 52 ($SD = 10.83$), the youngest respondent was 27 and the oldest respondent was 68, and 8 did not respond to the question. Regarding highest level of education obtained, 22 respondents have obtained post-graduate degrees (49%), 12 obtained bachelor's degrees (27%), 2 responded some college (4%), 2 obtained a high school diploma or GED (4%) and 7 did not respond to the question (16%). Employment status was 80% working full-time, 7% other than working full-time, and 13% did not respond to the question. Results on race were 35 white (78%), 1 black (2%), 2 Hispanic (4%), 1 other (2%), and 6 (14%) did not respond to the question.

Occupation

A second section was developed to collect data on occupational details of respondents. Regarding the type of government service respondents were a part of, results were varied. 5 (11%) were a part of administration, 6 (13%) were a part of finance, 1 (2%) was a part of education, 5 (11%) were a part of environment, 6 (13%) were a part of public health, 2 (4%) were a part of social services, 1 (2%) was a part of housing, 4 (9%) were a part of economic development, 2 (4%) were a part of public safety, 3 (7%) were a part of transportation, and 10 (22%) did not respond to the question. When asked what they would describe their job function to be, 25 responded administrator (56%), 6 program coordinator (13%), 2 subject matter expert (4%), 8 other (18%),

and 4 did not respond to the question (9%). Years of experience in respondents' current job was varied. 5 (11%) had been in their current job for less than 2 years, 9 (20%) 3-5 years, 6 (13%) 5-10 years, 15 (33%) 10-20 years, 6 (13%) more than 20 years, and 4 (9%) did not respond to the question. Years of experience in public service was less varied. 1 (2%) had less than 2 years in public service, 3 (7%) 3-5 years, 3 (7%) 5-10 years, 13 (29%) 10-20 years, 21 (47%) more than 20 years, and 4 (9%) did not respond to the question. Regarding membership in a union, 9 are currently members of a union (20%), 32 are not currently members of a union (71%), and 4 did not respond (9%).

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis was that public servants who have higher levels of exposure to competitive practices will perceive them more negatively. To analyze this relationship, cross tabulation was conducted of questions 10 and 11 which were designed to measure this relationship. Results from question 10 were that 20% said competitive practices were very common, 29% said common, 31% said uncommon, and 7% said very uncommon. In question 11, when asked how they perceived the effects of competitive practices in their organization, 18% of respondents said favorable, and 44% said unfavorable. From these results, it was gained that the correlation between the extent to which respondents observe competitive practices in their organization and how they perceive the effects of competitive practices in their organization was not significant, $p = 0.68$.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis was that public servants who perceive their performance evaluations to be less correlated to their job duties will perceive their job satisfaction to be lower. This relationship was analyzed using cross tabulation of questions 15 and 16. Responses to question 15 were distributed relatively evenly. 15.2% responded very strong, 36.4% strong, 21.2%

weak, and 27.3% very weak. In question 16, respondents were asked to rate their job satisfaction. 20% were very satisfied, 29% were satisfied, 16% were neutral, and 2% were very unsatisfied. These results show that the correlation between how strongly respondents' performance evaluations correlate to their job duties with their perception of job satisfaction was not significant, $p = 0.32$.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis was that public servants who perceive competitive practices to be unfavorable will perceive their job satisfaction to be lower. Cross tabulation of questions 11 and 16 was conducted in order to analyze this relationship. In question 11, when asked how they perceived the effects of competitive practices in their organization, 18% said favorable, and 44% said unfavorable. Results from question 16, which asked how respondents rated their job satisfaction, were that 20% were very satisfied, 29% were satisfied, 16% were neutral, and 2% were very unsatisfied. After analyzing the results of these two questions together, it was concluded that the correlation between how respondents perceive the effects of competitive practices in their organization with their perception of job satisfaction was not significant, $p = 0.33$.

Additional Findings

After extensive examination of the survey results, one significant correlation was found that was not originally a relationship of interest. This correlation was between how many years a respondent had in their current job (question 5) and how they perceived the effects of competitive practices in their organization (question 11). It appeared that as the years of experience in a respondent's current job increased, how they perceived the effects of competitive practices decreased. The significance of the correlation was $p = 0.01$. The existence of this apparent

relationship is undoubtedly intriguing, and while there were no significant correlations related to the hypotheses, further analysis is certainly warranted.

Discussion

The results of this research conclude that there is no relationship between the prevalence of competitive practices in a public sector organization and the perceived job satisfaction of its employees. This conclusion can be broken down further by examining the three hypotheses formulated earlier in this research.

Hypothesis 1: Public servants who have higher levels of exposure to competitive practices will perceive them more negatively. This hypothesis was not supported because when asked “to what extent do you observe competitive practices in their organization?” and “how do you perceive the effects of competitive practices in their organization?”, while a large number responded “common” and “unfavorable”, a similarly large number responded “uncommon” and “unfavorable”. This indicates that the level of exposure to competitive practices may not have an effect on how they are perceived. The level of exposure to competitive practices was varied, however perception of them was mostly unfavorable. This could mean that while public servants perceive competitive practices unfavorably, they may not be aware of what qualifies exactly as a competitive practice, and thus have difficulty identifying them accurately.

Hypothesis 2: Public servants who perceive their performance evaluations to be less correlated to their job duties will perceive their job satisfaction to be lower. This hypothesis was not supported because when asked “how strongly do your performance evaluations correlate to your job duties?” and “how would you rate your job satisfaction?” most were satisfied with their job but feelings on performance evaluations were split. Overall, job satisfaction was high despite varied perception of how their performance is evaluated. This may indicate that the perceived

relevance of performance evaluations to job duties has no effect on perceived job satisfaction. Given that participants were not required to answer the question asking them to rate their job satisfaction, those who perceive their job satisfaction to be lower may not have answered the question. The low response rate may have been a factor in perceived job satisfaction being rated relatively high.

Hypothesis 3: Public servants who perceive competitive practices to be unfavorable will perceive their job satisfaction to be lower. This hypothesis was not supported because when asked “how do you perceive the effects of competitive practices in your organization?” and “how would you rate your job satisfaction?” the vast majority of respondents perceived competitive practices unfavorably, and yet were still satisfied or very satisfied with their job. This suggests that unfavorable perception of competitive practices may have no effect on perception of job satisfaction. One explanation of this could be that while competitive practices are perceived to be unfavorable, they play a small role in how individuals rate their overall job satisfaction. Once again, the low response rate of the survey may influence results pertaining to the perception of job satisfaction, i.e. the actual perceived job satisfaction of the population may be lower if there was a higher response rate to the survey.

While none of these hypotheses were able to be proven in this research, there was one surprising relationship in the data that was statistically significant. From the survey, there is a negative relationship between the number of years a public servant has in their current job and their perception of competitive practices. The greater the years of experience in their current job, the less favorable they perceive competitive practices. One possible explanation of this could be that less experienced public servants have always worked within the sphere of influence of new public management and competitive practices are the norm to them. Conversely, more experienced

public servants may have been in public service long enough to see, over time, the negative consequences competitive practices can have.

The principle lesson learned from this research was that while public servants view competitive practices negatively, and nearly half of respondents viewed their performance evaluations negatively, neither competitive practices nor irrelevant performance evaluations seem to have any impact on perceived job satisfaction. The implications of this are that in spite of all the criticisms of new public management, it is unlikely to have an impact on job satisfaction. Despite public servants' negative perceptions, it would appear that the good still outweighs the bad. From this, it can be surmised that the prevalence of new public management, and the competitive practices it supports, are unlikely to have an effect on public sector recruitment and retention.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study was not without its limitations. First, the scope of the survey, at only 45 respondents and limited to Massachusetts municipal government employees, is not sufficiently large a sample to accurately gauge the perception and opinions of public servants as a whole. With a response rate of only 6.4%, there is likely bias in the sample of respondents. For example, zero participants rated their job satisfaction as unsatisfied and only one participated rated their job satisfaction as very unsatisfied. One explanation of this might be that participants who perceive their job satisfaction to be low did not answer the question or did not respond to the survey. A future survey with a much higher response rate would be beneficial in providing a more representative, less bias sample. Moving forward, a larger more inclusive survey of public sector employees should be conducted throughout the United States to collect a better sample of the target population. While this research was illuminating in unexpected ways, it raises more questions than

it answers. Why does job satisfaction go unhindered in spite of grievances with systematic issues such as competitive practices and irrelevant performance evaluations? Why do less experienced public servants view competitive practices more favorably? Answers to these questions, with further research, may prove invaluable to the field of public administration and personnel management.

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument

Q1 You are invited to participate in a research study about opinions on public sector employment. This project is being conducted by Dr. Melinda R. Tarsi and Adam Ferreira, Department of Political Science, Bridgewater State University, as part of an Honors thesis. If you agree to be part of the research study, you will take a brief survey of approximately 5 minutes in length, and which involves no risk or discomfort to you as the participant. Your responses to all questions will be confidential to the degree permitted by the technology being used, and will be used for the purposes of research. Your participation is completely voluntary; even if you decide to begin the survey, you may change your mind and stop at any time. If you withdraw early from the survey, your data will be eliminated from the database. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any other concerns about this study, please contact Dr. Melinda R. Tarsi, melinda.tarsi@bridgew.edu or (508) 531-2404. If you wish to speak with someone other than the researchers, please contact the BSU Institutional Review Board, (508) 531-1242. If you agree to participate, please click on the link below to continue to the survey. You will have the option to refuse to answer individual questions and may change your mind and leave the study at any time without penalty.

- ☐ I agree to take the survey
- ☐ I do not agree to take the survey and decline participation

Q2 What level of government are you employed in?

- ☐ Federal
- ☐ State
- ☐ County
- ☐ Special District
- ☐ Municipality

Q3 What type of government service are you a part of?

- ☐ Administration
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Energy
- ☐ Environment
- ☐ Public Health
- ☐ Social Services
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Economic Development
- ☐ Labor
- ☐ Public Safety
- ☐ Defense
- ☐ Transportation

Q4 What would you describe your job function to be?

- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Policy Analyst
- ☐ Program Coordinator
- ☐ Management Analyst
- ☐ Subject Matter Expert
- ☐ Research Associate
- ☐ Other _____

Q5 How many years of experience do you have in your current job?

- ☐ Less than 2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 10-20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

Q6 How many years of experience do you have in public service?

- ☐ Less than 2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 10-20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

Q7 Are you currently a member of a union?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q8 Are any of the following obstacles to achieving your work goals?

- ☐ Competing with other departments in your organization
- ☐ Competing with other individuals in your organization
- ☐ Performance evaluations do not sufficiently measure effectiveness
- ☐ Conforming to ineffective performance evaluation metrics

Q9 For the purpose of this survey, competitive practices are defined as either 1.) competition over limited resources, such as time or money, or 2.) performance measurement that relies heavily on statistics and outputs, not outcomes

Q10 To what extent do you observe competitive practices in your organization?

- ☐ Very common
- ☐ Common
- ☐ Uncommon
- ☐ Very uncommon

Q11 How do you perceive the effects of competitive practices in your organization?

- ☐ Favorable
- ☐ Unfavorable

Q12 How strongly does the work you do correlate to your job description?

- ☐ Very strong
- ☐ Strong
- ☐ Weak
- ☐ Very weak

Q13 How strongly does the work you do correlate to serving the public?

- ☐ Very strong
- ☐ Strong
- ☐ Weak
- ☐ Very weak

Q14 How strongly does the work you do correlate to serving your organization?

- ☐ Very strong
- ☐ Strong
- ☐ Weak
- ☐ Very weak

Q15 How strongly do your performance evaluations correlate to your job duties?

- ☐ Very strong
- ☐ Strong
- ☐ Weak
- ☐ Very weak

Q16 How would you rate your job satisfaction?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Unsatisfied
- ☐ Very unsatisfied

Q17 Before we conclude, we would like to ask a few short demographics questions.

Q18 What is your sex?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

Q19 In what year were you born? Please enter the four-digit year.

Q20 What is your highest level of education obtained?

- ☐ No high school
- ☐ High school/GED
- ☐ Some college
- ☐ Two-year degree
- ☐ Four-year degree/Bachelor's
- ☐ Post grad

Q21 Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

- ☐ Working full time now
- ☐ Working part time now
- ☐ Temporarily laid off
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Permanently disabled
- ☐ Taking care of home or family
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Other

Q22 What is your race?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native America
- ☐ Middle Eastern
- ☐ More than one race and/or ethnicity
- ☐ Other _____

Appendix B

Tables

Hypothesis 1.

		To what extent do you observe competitive practices in your organization?				
		Very Common	Common	Uncommon	Very Uncommon	Total
How do you perceive the effects of competitive practices in your organization?	Favorable	2 7.1%	3 10.7%	3 10.7%	0 0%	8 21.4%
	Unfavorable	2 7.1%	10 35.7%	7 25%	1 3.6%	20 71.4%
	Total	4 14.4%	13 46.4%	10 35.7%	1 3.6%	28

p-value	0.68
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Hypothesis 2.

		How strongly do your performance evaluations correlate to your job duties?				
		Very strong	Strong	Weak	Very weak	Total
How would you rate your job satisfaction?	Very Satisfied	3 9.1%	5 15.2%	0 0%	0 0%	8 24.2%
	Satisfied	2 6.1%	6 18.2%	5 15.2%	6 18.2%	19 57.6%
	Neutral	0 0%	1 3.0%	2 6.1%	2 6.1%	5 15.2%
	Unsatisfied	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
	Very Unsatisfied	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 3.0%	1 3.0%
	Total	5 15.2%	12 36.3%	7 21.2%	9 27.3%	33

p-value	0.32
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Hypothesis 3.

		How do you perceive the effects of competitive practices in your organization?		
		Favorable	Unfavorable	Total
How would you rate your job satisfaction?	Very Satisfied	4 14.3%	3 10.7%	7 25.0%
	Satisfied	4 14.3%	13 46.4%	17 60.7%
	Neutral	0 0%	4 14.3%	4 14.3%
	Unsatisfied	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
	Very Unsatisfied	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
	Total	8 28.6%	20 71.4%	28

p-value	0.33
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Significant Relationship.

		How many years of experience do you have in your current job?					
		Less than 2 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	10-20 years	More than 20 years	Total
How do you perceive the effects of competitive practices in your organization?	Favorable	4 14.3%	1 3.6%	1 3.6%	2 7.1%	0 0%	8 28.6%
	Unfavorable	0 0%	6 21.4%	3 10.7%	7 25.0%	4 14.3%	20 71.4%
	Total	4 14.3%	7 25.0%	4 14.3%	9 32.1%	4 14.3%	28

p-value	0.01
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Questions 10 and 11.

		To what extent do you observe competitive practices in your organization?				
		Very common	Common	Uncommon	Very uncommon	Total
How would you rate your job satisfaction?	Very satisfied	3 7.7%	1 2.6%	4 10.3%	1 2.6%	9 23.1%
	Satisfied	3 7.7%	9 23.1%	8 20.5%	2 5.1%	22 56.4%
	Neutral	2 5.1%	3 7.7%	2 5.1%	0 0%	7 17.9%
	Unsatisfied	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
	Very unsatisfied	1 2.6%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 2.6%
	Total	9 23.1%	13 28.2%	14 35.9%	3 7.7%	39

p-value	0.81
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Demographics.

Sex		
Male	66.7%	26
Female	33.3%	13
Other	0.0%	0
Total	100.0%	39

Year of Birth					
Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Count
1949	1990	1965.92	10.83	117.37	37

Highest Level of Education Obtained		
No high school	0.0%	0
High school/GED	5.3%	2
Some college	5.3%	2
Two-year degree	0.0%	0
Four-year degree/Bachelor's	31.6%	12
Post grad	57.9%	22
Total	100.0%	38

Current Employment Status		
Working full time now	92.3%	36
Working part time now	5.1%	2
Temporarily laid off	0.0%	0
Unemployed	0.0%	0
Retired	2.6%	1
Permanently disabled	0.0%	0
Taking care of home or family	0.0%	0
Student	0.0%	0
Other	0.0%	0
Total	100%	39

Race		
White	89.7%	35
Black	2.6%	1
Hispanic	5.1%	2
Asian	0.0%	0
Native America	0.0%	0
Middle Eastern	0.0%	0
More than one race and/or ethnicity	0.0%	0
Other	2.6%	1
Total	100.0%	39